

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /063 W

----- 086892

R 052226Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2395

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0655

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HO

SUBJECT: NATIONALIST PARTY CONVENTION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0588 (DTG 041411Z FEB 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE NATIONALIST PARTY HELD ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION IN TEGUCIGALPA FEBRUARY 1-2. THE CONVENTION ELECTED A NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND ISSUED A DECLARATION STATING THE PARTY'S POSITION ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. THE RESULTS OF THE CONVENTION CLEARLY SHOWS THAT RICARDO ZUNIGA AGUSTINUS REMAINS THE PARTY LEADER AND THAT THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE TO HIS CONTROL, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONALIST PARTY HELD ITS ANNUAL CONVENTION IN TEGUCIGALPA FEBRUARY 1-2. FIFTY-FIVE DELEGATES FROM ALL THE DEPARTMENT WERE IN ATTENDANCE. THE TWO MAJOR ITEMS OF BUSINESS WERE TO ELECT A NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND TO ISSUE A DECLARATION STATING THE PARTY'S POSITION IN REGARD TO IMPORTANT ISSUES.

2. THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS ELECTED WITH NO CONTRO-

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VERSY AND MINIMAL DEBUTE. IRMA ACOSTA DE FORTIN WAS

ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE AND ELEVEN OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BODY WERE ALSO CHOSEN. AN ADVISORY COUNCIL WILL BE SELECTED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. RICARDO ZUNIGA AGUSTINUS WAS CONFIRMED AS PARTY COORDINATOR GENERAL.

3. THE DECLARATION CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS:

(A) THE PARTY HAD ACCEPTED THE INVITATION OF CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMATION OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL AND HAD MADE CLEAR IN CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES THAT THE MAJOR TASK OF THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE TO DEVELOP AN ELECTORAL LAW;

(B) OTHER BASIC MATTERS SUCH AS ACHIEVING A PEACE TREATY WITH EL SALVADOR AND JOINING A CENTRAL AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMUNITY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY A NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY;

(C) THE PARTY IS FIRMLY IN FAVOR OF RESOLVING THE DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR AND OF PARTICIPATING IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMUNITY BUT ONLY UNDER CONDITIONS THAT PROTECT THE JUST INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY;

(D) THE PARTY WILL NEVER ACCEPT THE SIGNING OF A PEACE TREATY UNLESS THE DISPUTE WITH EL SALVADOR HAS BEEN DEFINITELY RESOLVED AND THE TREATY RATIFIED BY A NATIONAL CONGRESS;

(E) ANY AGREEMENT WHICH DOES NOT TREAT ALL THE POINTS OF THE DISPUTE IN A SIMULTANEOUS FORM WILL BE CONSIDERED DAMAGING TO THE NATION AND ITS AUTHORS WILL BE CONSIDERED TRAITORS TO THEIR COUNTRY AND PUBLIC CRIMINALS WHO SHOULD BE TRIED BY THE COURTS;

(F) ONLY A NATIONAL CONGRESS HAS THE RIGHT TO RATIFY A TREATY AND ANY TREATY THAT HAS NOT BEEN RATIFIED IS "A DEAD LETTER", AND

(G) THE PARTY DEMANDS A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME.

4. POLOFF HAD CONVERSATION WITH RICARDO ZUNIGA ON FEBRUARY 4. ZUNIGA SAID THE CONVENTION HAD BEEN NORMAL AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE CONTROVERSY. IN REFERRING TO CRITICAL REMARKS BY ARMANDO VELASQUEZ CERRATO, ZUNIGA SAID THAT VELASQUEZ REALLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF POLITICS AND HAD LITTLE IF ANY FOLLOWING. HE COMMENTED THAT THE SELEC-

TION OF A WOMAN TO HOLD THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THE "WOMEN'S VOTE." HE REMARKED THAT THE PARTY DECLARATION TOOK A STRONG STAND ON THE DISPUTE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH THEY WANTED TO SEE THE CONFLICT SETTLED, THEY ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD PERMIT THE FRONTIER DEMARCATION TO BE PUT OFF FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE. HE SAID THAT THE FRONTIER QUESTION COULD REMAIN OPEN FOREVER IF IT IS NOT RESOLVED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE OTHER QUESTIONS SUCH AS RENEWAL OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, OPENING THE PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF AN IMMIGRATION AGREEMENT.

5. COMMENT: THE RESULTS OF THE CONVENTION RECONFIRM ZUNIGA'S CONTROL OF THE PARTY. THIS CONTROL HAS NOT BEEN SERIOUSLY CHALLENGED EVEN THOUGH VARIOUS GROUPS HAVE SPRUNG UP DEMANDING AN END TO "CAUDILLO RULE," A DEMOCRATIZATION OF INTERNAL PARTY PROCESSES AND ALLOWING YOUNGER PARTY MEMBERS TO RISE TO POSITIONS OF IMPORTANCE. HOWEVER, THESE GROUPS HAVE PROVEN INEFFECTUAL AND THERE IS NO ORGANIZED RESISTENCE TO ZUNIGA'S CONTINUED LEADERSHIP, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME. END COMMENT.
SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY MEETINGS, PARTY LEADERS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchant0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TEGUCI00655
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760047-0118
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760277/aaaacpse.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TEGUCIGALPA 588
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <21 OCT 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NATIONALIST PARTY CONVENTION
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HO, NATIONALIST PARTY, (ZUNIA AGUSTINUS, RICARDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006